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UNCLAS ABU DHABI 02968

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ACTION: AMB
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FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0522
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUCNWTO/WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION COLLECTIVE

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SIPDIS

STATE FOR EB/TPP/MTA, NEA/ARPI, NEA/PI
STATE PASS USTR FOR DOUG BELL

E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: HIGH PROFILE UAE GOVERNMENT OUTREACH ON FTA

¶1. (U) The UAE government has been actively pursuing high-level outreach to the press and UAE business community on the benefits of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the United States. Minister of Economy and Planning Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi and Minister of State for Finance and Industry Dr. Mohammed Khalfan bin Kharbash (the co-chairs of the UAE FTA negotiating team) have both made prominent press releases lauding the expected economic benefits the UAE would experience from an FTA with the United States. Anticipated benefits include freeing access to U.S. markets, promoting technology transfers to the UAE private sector, boosting domestic industrial growth, and hastening economic diversification. Sheikha Lubna also discussed UAE actions in order to meet the needs of FTA and WTO obligations, including planned revisions to the UAE's commercial laws to bring them in line with international developments (i.e. permit full foreign ownership of companies in certain sectors). These articles were prominently displayed on the front of the business sections of several UAE papers.

¶2. (U) In addition to public statements, Sheikha Lubna and Dr. Khirbash have also meetings with key stakeholders on the benefits of an FTA. Dr. Khirbash met with the Dubai Economic Council, a body comprised of the leading economic and business stakeholders in Dubai, to discuss progress on the FTA. The continuous press reports and meetings indicate that the UAE is dedicating more time and resources to ensuring that the UAE public is more informed about the progress and benefits of a Free Trade Agreement, addressing one of the earlier complaints from UAE businesses that the UAEG was not informing necessary stakeholders of the benefits or progress of an FTA.
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